

SENIOR CENTER/COUNCIL ON AGING (COA)

Fiscal Year 2008

PRINCIPAL GOAL: To run a multi-purpose Senior Center which serves as the community focal point for the provision of services to the elderly. The S. C. works to initiate, facilitate, coordinate, and/or provide those services which in the broadest sense enhance dignity, support independence, maintain health, and promote the involvement of Amherst's elderly in the general community.

THE SENIOR CENTER: A VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Whether it's simply reading our 16-page **bi-monthly newsletter, *THE SENIOR SPIRIT***, or coming in daily for the hot lunch program, Amherst's older residents have come to rely on the Senior Center. Here are examples of some of our program and service offerings in FY 08:

CLINICS: foot care, ear irrigation, massage, blood pressure, flu/health fair, hearing aid repair, and free consultations two days a week with an R.N.; psychological counseling, energy healing

FITNESS PROGRAMS/CLASSES: Strength training, gentle fitness, Tai Chi, folkdance, Qigong, laughter yoga, gentle yoga, twice wkly walking club, line dancing, ballroom dancing, dancercise, "Improving Posture and Overall Fitness", EnhanceFitness®

ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES: "Heroes in the Sciences", Advanced Computer, Using the Internet, Shakespeare's The Tempest, Shakespeare's Othello, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet., Shakespeare's Hamlet, Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale, knitting, sewing, quilting, watercolor/oil painting, , drawing, cooking, memoir writing, financial management, short story readings, Cosmology, Using the Internet, Understanding U.S. and World Economies, Smith/UMass Computer Research Workshops, Marketplace Seminar: Oral History Services.

DISCUSSION/SUPPORT GROUPS: New Options, Peace of Mind, Audio-Book Group for Visually Impaired Persons, Caregivers' Support, Aging Together

SOCIAL RECREATION: Musical Showcases, bus/van/plane trips, COA 40th Anniversary Social, Senior Health Services Grand Opening Reception, Tag Sale, Public Safety picnic, Thanksgiving Dinner, bridge, scrabble, Chinese mah-jongg, grocery bingo, Volunteer Awards Social,

EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS: Financial Planning, Amherst Fire Department seminars in Fall Prevention, Kitchen Safety, Fire Prevention and All There is to Know About 911; Amherst Police Department seminar on "Identity Theft"; "Depression and Anxiety in the Older Adult", "Understanding, Treating & Managing Arthritis", Five College Learning in Retirement informational meeting, "Smile for Seniors" (dental health), "The Aging Eye", "Supportive Herbs for Arthritis", "Foot Health & Education for an Aging Population", "Bladder Control", "Understanding Dementia", "Living Well With Diabetes", "How to Recognize True Health Care Emergencies", "Being An Effective Consumer 101--Approaching the Doctor's Office", "Healthy Eating" Nutrition Talk, "How to Handle Winter Emergencies", "Prevention and Treatment of Stroke", "Understanding Cooley Dickinson Hospital's Hospitalist Program", "What is a Geriatrician and How is a Geriatrician's Care Different?", "Breast Cancer in Older Women", "Quality Living", "Individual Medication Brown Bag Review", "Everything You Wanted to Know About Shingles Disease and the Vaccine to Prevent It", "Boning Up on Osteoporosis", "Basics of Asthma and Devices Used to Treat It", "Palliative vs Hospice Care", "Summertime Emergencies", "Prostate cancer: Diagnosis and Treatment in the 21st Century", "Prevention and Treatment of Stroke", "Diabetes Basics", "Making Connections: Diabetes and Heart Health", "Hospice and Medicare/Medicaid", "Sleep: Normal and Abnormal Issues", "The Use of an Urgent Care Center", "High Blood Pressure", "To Move or Not to Move", "Aging With Vitality", "The Abbeyfield Housing Concept",

SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS: HVES (Highland Valley Elder Services) Title III Congregate hot lunch program, Meals on Wheels evening hot supper through the University of Massachusetts, HVES Title III Home Delivered hot lunch, tax assistance, leaf raking, personal care/homemaking referral, friendly visitor program, social worker counseling/I+R, Brown Bag monthly groceries through Western Mass. Food Bank, Food Box monthly groceries through Amherst Survival Center, free weekly bread/produce giveaway, emergency food pantry, volunteer driving, SHINE health insurance counseling, tax assistance, Tax Work-Off intake, subsidized van ticket sales, farmers' market coupon distribution, medical rides and free wheelchair and equipment loan closet, free smoke detector program with Amherst Fire Department, and partnership with the SALT Council to provide services such as house numbering, RUOK, File of Life, 911 Cell Phone distribution, SAFE Elder project

SENIOR CENTER CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY

The Amherst Senior Center opened its doors at 17 Kellogg Avenue in 1968 thanks to the efforts of the Council on Aging established the previous year by a vote of Town Meeting while Allen Torrey was Town Manager. Events marking the occasion this 40th anniversary year include a creative dance performance/70th birthday celebration by Alicia Morton at the Nacul Center in May; marching with a special banner in the Fourth of July Town parade and a special banquet planned for October 19th at the Bangs Community Center.

COUNSELING CENTER

The Senior Center was again awarded a Title III grant from Highland Valley Elder Services (HVES) to continue providing psychotherapy services to eligible elders and caregivers of elders. The LICSW employed last fiscal year continued providing psychotherapy and we briefly hired a psychiatric nurse practitioner as the number of referrals was very high. Unfortunately, that trend did not continue and the second therapist's contract was not renewed. The focus this fiscal year has been on marketing the Counseling Center to increase the numbers of elders and caregivers served. Through the end of June 08, there were 25 elders and caregivers served with a total of 102 psychotherapy sessions provided.

SENIOR HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

Since late October 2007, Senior Health Services under the management of Director Lisa White, RN BS, has been offering clinic services to community seniors at the Senior Center on Mondays and Thursdays. By the end of June, 325 clinic visits were logged for 71 community clients. Health services including blood pressure monitoring, blood glucose testing, medication information, weight monitoring, respiratory assessment, nutrition information, wound and skin assessment, ear and throat inspection and assistance with care planning have been provided. The nurse often works in collaboration with the client and their health care provider. At times the clinic has served as a first stop for clients concerned about symptoms but unsure if medical attention is needed.

Some special programs have been provided by the nurse over the year. Additional clinical services have been provided to the community at the Ann Whalen Wellness Center on Thursday mornings since mid May. This post is covered through the school year by UMASS clinical supervisor and nursing students. As part of her work for the Wellness Center, the nurse saw clients individually and provided talks on Medicine Safety and Coping with Stress. In June, two presentations on diabetes diagnosis and management were provided at the Senior Center. Also at the Senior Center in June, pilot sessions for a support group concerned with the issues of aging called "Aging Together" were co-facilitated with spiritual counselor and bereavement specialist

Norma Palazzo. These sessions were well received by participants and a similar group is being planned for the fall.

It is important to note that the Amherst Senior Center's Senior Health Services program, receives no Town funding, but continues to grow and thrive thanks to donations and grants. The annual \$10,000 donation from Amherst residents Joseph and Dorothy Gavin is the primary funding for the Bangs-based twice-weekly clinics. Additionally this year, two grants were received to begin offering outreach nursing services: \$5,000 from Cooley Dickinson Hospital and \$1,625 from The Amherst Club.

UPDATE ON FOOD PROGRAMS

Our home-delivered **lunchtime** meals program which asks for only an optional donation from the participant, continues to grow at a fast pace as people are living longer and find it difficult to shop, cook and pay for food. As fuel costs increase, the home delivered meal becomes more and more important also as a means to afford other essentials. We have six meal delivery routes daily to residents in Amherst and Pelham and we use volunteer drivers exclusively. With the price of fuel increasing, fewer drivers are willing to donate their gas (now three do) and instead most opt for the \$.35/mile stipend. The stipend goes to \$.50/mile July 1, 2008. The \$.91 per meal we get from our HVES Title III grant to cover gas and other program expenses in FY 08 obviously doesn't cover the gas reimbursement for meal recipients living deep in Pelham or the far edges of Amherst. (Unfortunately we haven't been able to find any Pelham residents to assist in deliveries there.) The challenge of keeping drivers as fuel costs increase is a nationwide problem and ideas are being floated for how to cope, such as delivering frozen meals 2-3 times a week. We feel this would be a risky change as the well-being check, an important component of the service, would then be compromised. (Our deliverers have found several elders who have fallen or were semi-conscious or even deceased.) Additionally some elders are too frail to deal with frozen meals. Our drivers sometimes have to open the hot meal and bring the utensils to the recipient as some are so frail and disabled they can't manage those details.

Our home-delivered **supper-time** UMASS Meals on Wheels (MOWs) program has seen a slight decrease in participation. There were 13 fewer participants in the program this fiscal year as compared to FY 07. Additionally, there were more elders who were short term participants; these elders received the MOWs for a period of 2 – 4 weeks after a stay in a rehabilitation center or the hospital. During the intake these elders had stated that they needed the meals only until they'd regained their strength and could prepare meals on their own. The decrease could also be due to the cost of the program which was increased in May 07 due to rising fuel costs. There will be another increase beginning August 4, 2008, as UMASS has raised the cost of the meals. The continuing rise in fuel costs also play into this rate increase, as we need to retain our volunteer meal deliverers and to do this we changed our mileage stipend structure.

PARTICIPATION IN FREE/LOW COST FOOD PROGRAMS

Name of Program	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08
Congregate Hot Lunch	5,933	6,467 (9% increase)	6,973 (13.78% increase)	6,147 (11% decrease)	5,420 (11.8% decrease) (If no snow days we would have served 5490 meals and then the decrease would have been 10.7%)
Meals on Wheels (UMass food delivered in evening)	3,796	3,843 (1% increase)	4,250 (11% increase)	5,006 (17% increase)	4,790 (4% decrease) If no snow days we would have served 140 more and seen only a 2% decrease
Home delivered meals (HVES food delivered at 11 AM)	12,889	13,6639 (6% increase)	14,435 (6% increase)	16,118 (11% increase)	16,749 (4% increase) If no snow we would have delivered 16961 meals and then the increase would have been 9.5%
Brown Bag (Western Mass Food Bank)	696	735 (5% increase)	1,035 (41% increase)	1,017 (1% decrease)	1,016 (>1% change)
Food Box (Survival Center food)	298	453 (52% increase)	450 (>1% change)	529 (17% increase)	483 (9% decrease)
Free Bread & Produce Giveaway	2,080	2,543 (22% increase)	5,282 (52% increase)	5,493 (3% increase)	4960 (10% decrease)
Grocery Pantry Emergency Food Give-away	29	82 (283% increase)	102 (20% increase)	115 (12% increase)	38 (67% decrease)

"FRIENDS OF THE AMHERST SENIOR CENTER"

The Friends of the Amherst Senior Center, a 501C-3 corporation established in 2007, raised \$6,350 in FY 08 to help support the services and programs of the Senior Center. Most of the money came as a result of a letter from the Friends enclosed in *The Senior Spirit*, the bi-monthly newsletter of the Senior Center. The newly-established Friends group is just beginning to investigate other fundraising ideas.

BUDGET CUTS

Our Program Coordinator who was full-time (37.5/hrs) in FY 06, was reduced to four days a week (30/hrs) in FY 07, and to 20 hrs/wk in FY 08. The long-time employee in that position left as a consequence and the salary level was downgraded before a replacement was hired. The entire salary is paid by a Dept. of Elder Affairs Formula Grant (\$19,383 in FY 08). Our Program Coordinator serves primarily as our Volunteer Coordinator, but she also has responsibilities associated with our food programs. Our Center Activities line item has been reduced from \$6,500

to \$3,000, our Office Supplies from \$1,500 to \$1000 and our dues & memberships line item has been reduced from \$600 to \$360.

TRANSPORTATION CRISIS ELIMINATED

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) awarded the paratransit contract for this area to Hulmes Transportation, an area transportation provider that had the contract prior to MV Transportation. The transition from MV to Hulmes went fairly smoothly with very few glitches. Feedback from elders and younger people with disabilities who utilize the van services has been mostly positive. Additionally, PVTA has re-instituted monthly meetings with PVTA area Senior Center/Council On Aging directors, a rider advisory council, and monthly rider meetings which are facilitated by Nicole Rohan, PVTA Director of Transit Services. Due to the high cost of fuel and how the PVTA is funded by the state, on July 1st, there will be the 25% increase in ticket prices for the large buses, from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per ride. This means that van tickets for elders and people with disabilities will cost \$2.50 as the ADA states that paratransit van services can not charge more than double the regular bus fare. The Town subsidy will lower the cost to \$2.00 per ticket, but many, many people who use the paratransit services are on a fixed income and this extra cost is on top of higher food prices and higher heating fuel costs.

SENIOR CENTER CHOSEN AS SITE FOR EXCITING NEW FITNESS PROGRAM

The Amherst and Northampton Senior Centers are serving as two regional pilot sites for Enhance Fitness®, a program being studied by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and grant-funded by Highland Valley Elder Services, our AAA (Area Agency on Aging). This hour-long class, which takes place three times a week, is based on scientific research and input from older adults and combines three key components of fitness: strength training, flexibility and cardiovascular conditioning. Classes are limited to 25 persons and we have had an extensive waiting list for each of the three nine-week sessions.

SENIOR CENTER HOSTS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION RESEARCH STUDY

The Smith College School of Social Work and UMass Computer Science Department received a grant from the National Science Foundation to find ways that technology can help seniors stay safely in their own homes as they age. The grant paid for state-of-the-art computer equipment some of which was installed in the Senior Center's computer lab last fall to simulate a "smart room". Prior to the installation phase, seniors, their family members and elder care professionals met with the research team to make the technology useful and easy to use. Elders who have enrolled in the study have received some instruction and next they will learn (1) how the computer and a video camera can help find misplaced objects such as glasses or a remote, (2) how the computer can help detect the likelihood that someone could fall (digital films of gait and movement of research team "actors" will demonstrate how changes that can lead to falls can be detected), and (3) how to stay in touch with family, friends and professionals by videophone. Elder participants have already learned how to keep track of daily appointments and how to use computer games to provide mental stimulation and enjoyment.

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Although resources through the Town budget are limited, the Senior Center is able to offer a wide array of programs and services because of two important categories of contributions: **volunteer time** and **in-kind donations of goods and services**.

In FY 08 approximately 10,790 of volunteer time was given by 265 volunteers in the following categories:

# of Hours Given	# of Volunteers
20 hours/week or more	1
5 hrs/wk up to 19.5 hrs/wk	11
1-5 hrs/wk	39
10hrs/yr to 50hrs/yr	121
Less than 10 hrs/yr	129

The value of these hours, according to the Points of Light Foundation is \$170,776.35

In-kind donations represent tangible goods or services generally considered essential for the Senior Center's operations, but not paid for out of its budget. **See the table below summarizing FY 08 In-Kind donations:**

In-Kind Donation	Value
Rent/Space (gross square feet=7,399)	\$73,000 value
Transportation	\$4,719.68
Utilities	\$46,511
Van Garaging, Gas & Service	\$1,068
Custodial/Maintenance	\$19,000
Plowing/Outside Maintenance	\$604
Durable Medical Equipment	\$258
Recognition Events	\$322
Donated Goods	\$1,557.25
Value of Crafts Made & Sold for Sr. Ctr.	\$811
Newspapers	\$7,750
Speakers/Presenters	\$34,077
Entertainers	\$708
Money donated, raised	\$29,138.25
Luncheons, food	\$232,518.16
Cable TV Service	\$540
Books/Videos/Puzzles	\$200
Information Technology Hardware	\$2,000
Total	\$457,441.34

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Director